

EFFICIENT and EFFECTIVE CONDUCTOR COMMUNICATION

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Both Efficient and Effective gesture are directly related to the level of success we have in communicating with the members of our ensembles. There are FIVE basic areas that are crucial to a clear, effective and efficient conductor communication:

POSTURE:

Head/neck- head posture slumping due to neck alignment (place hand on top of head, raise an inch or so - then draw top of head up to meet hand . . . notice that this exercise brings many other changes to the entire upper torso).

Shoulders-often sag forward or downward and forward (roll forward/up/around/back - and then drop -- at least three times to begin to get a better feel of placement)

Hip/pelvic set-often too far forward or "sitting" to to quality of chairs or posture while sitting (to correct "sitting"-draw pelvic hips forward // to correct leaning due to collapsed lower back-put hands on hips and adjust) NOTE: head/neck exercise above will have already helped in making the needed adjustment.

BALANCE:

Placement of feet - spread // even, or one ahead of the other.

Side by side motion // Forward and backward motion.

Come to rest when centered JUST forward of heel (be careful of being too far forward, i.e. center of arch, as that can put weight too far forward causing hip/pelvic counteradjustments . . . and visa/versa too far back on the heels

FLEXIBILITY:

Loose shoulders - stir air gently with arms while they hang gently down to the sides. . .

Raise forearms at elbows (no upper arm involvement)- keep shoulders in released and relaxed state. . .

Side to side motion with both hands to establish lower conducting plane . . .

ARTICULATION:

Additive: Fingers = pp // very light spicatto or light tonguing
add Wrist = p/mp // frog area spicatto or heavy tonguing
add forearm = mf/f
add upper arm = f/ff

**use shoulder areas for heavy accents /sforzandos / heavy legato or very intense passages

Subtractive: Reverse of above arm subareas.

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DENSITY:

Gravitational:

Use of elbows (toward ribs/floor), shoulders (in heavy posture), upper torso (weighted characteristics), facial (heavy or dark expression)

Experiment with various combinations with group.

Levitational:

Upper torso "lifted", shoulders "lightened", elbows "floating", body perhaps leaning back slightly, facial assistance through "enlightened countenance"- perhaps raised eyebrows- etc.

Lateral vs Vertical gesture:

Bow use, air supply and articulation control

Experiment with various combinations - and then mix with gravitational aspects listed above.

The School of Music at James Madison University offers both the M.M. in Orchestral Conducting and the D.M.A. in Conducting, Pedagogy and Literature. For more information, contact Dr. McCashin, or visit the JMU School of Music website: www.jmu.edu/music

Dr. McCashin is available for individual consultations or for school district conducting workshops. You may reach him either at home (Phone: 540/432-1809 / E-mail: boborch@aol.com) or through the School of Music at James Madison University (Phone: 540/568-6197 / E-mail: mccashrd@jmu.edu).

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